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COUNTRY Angola

SUBJECT Porto Amboim, Port Information

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SOURCE Officer of a US merchant ship.

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1. General: Porto Amboim (Lat 10° 43' 51" S, Long 13° 44' 59" E) is a slight indentation in the coast of Angola on the West African coast. It is an open roadstead with no berthing facilities for ocean-going ships. Coffee for export, the main traffic in the port, is worked by lighters. The town of Amboim is small with about 30 houses and a few stores.
2. Hydrography: The water off Porto Amboim is deep. It drops off suddenly reaching a depth of 10 fathoms within 500 feet of the beach. The port can be approached from any direction from northwest through southwest. The outstanding landmark is a high bluff resembling a sugar-loaf on which a light is located. A recommended approach is to place the high bluff on a true bearing of 090° and follow that heading. A small finger pier marked by red and green lights is situated near the base of the bluff.
3. Lighterage: All cargo is worked by lighters, of which there are about six to eight with approximate capacities of 60 tons. As there are no towing craft in the port, the lighters must either be shifted by hand line or moved by ship's own craft. The source prefers the latter alternative and uses a motor lifeboat. When using the hand-line method, a ship should moor close to a buoy located 100 feet from the finger pier. A line runs from this buoy to the pier and by means of this lighters can be shuttled between ship and pier using lines handled by native labor.
4. Pier: Built about May 1953, the finger pier is 75 feet long by about 25 feet wide. It is constructed of steel pilings with wooden decking and supports a small crane and a narrow gauge railway. The depth of water at its seaward end is about 30 feet, and although it is believed possible to bring a ship to the pier, it is dangerous and impractical because lighterage would still be required to work the ship's cargo. The pier is used to service lighters.
5. Crane: The crane is an old steam-powered, railway lift of the derrick type and is capable of handling up to five tons. It is moved by native labor.

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6. Railway: Two narrow gauge tracks running the length of the pier join into a single track leading the half-mile to the coffee warehouses. The rolling stock consists of several flat cars 10' by 4' and one small diesel engine.
7. Warehouses: Coffee for export is stored in three warehouses. These are of cement construction with clay tile roofing and are one story high, about 200 feet long by 75 feet wide.
8. Labor: Natives provide unskilled labor, while such skilled tasks as operating the crane and the railway are performed by Portuguese labor. Ships provide their own stevedore manpower as a rule.
9. Communications: Porto Amboim is in telephone contact with Luanda and has telegraph lines to both Luanda and Lobito.
10. Clearance Facilities: The primary avenue of communication with the outside world is the sea. No railroad is reported, and the only road is a poor road to Luanda which is not recommended for vehicles much larger than jeeps.

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